

Theology vol 107.
A

SUPPLEMENT
TO THE
VINDICATION
OF THE
G O S P E L
O F

St. MATTHEW.

Against a late TRACT, entitled,

*A Dissertation or Inquiry concerning the
Canonical Authority of the Gospel
according to Matthew.*

In which is particularly considered

The Argument advanced in the said *Dissertation*
against the present Canon of the *New Testament*,
from the pretended Number, Antiquity and
Reception of Forgeries under Apostolical Names
among the immediate Successors of the Apostles.

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in Marlborough.

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

THE *Attack made upon the Gospel of St. Matthew by the Author of the Dissertation, made it necessary in the first Place to publish a particular Vindication of that sacred Book. But observing since, that other Things, of the utmost Concern for the Honour of the New Testament Canon, have been rashly affirmed by the same Writer, I hoped it might not be unacceptable to the Reader, to find those bold Strokes animadverted on, in a Supplement to the said Vindication.*

It was shocking to every serious Christian, to be told so often and so confidently by the Anti-scriptural Writers, that the Age after the Apostles, in which the great Witnesses to the Genuineness of the Holy Books lived and wrote, was an Age abounding with innumerable Forgeries under inspired Names, and withal so excessively

The P R E F A C E.

fively credulous, that even the immediate Successors of the Apostles read many of those Forgeries in the publick Assemblies of Christians, as Canonical Scripture, without the least Mark of Distinction in point of Authority. I doubt not therefore, but all sober Men will be glad to find, that the Unbelievers have by no means sufficient Grounds for such Assertions; that the Forgeries under Apostolical Names, which certainly came out in the Times next following those of Inspiration, were but few; and that not one of those Few appears to have been read in any Assemblies of Christians, that were under the Direction of the Apostolical Fathers.

E R R A T A.

PAge 12. l. 27, 28. *for Apostolical, read Apocryphal;*
p. 14. lin. ult. *for Author, read Authors;* p. 53. l. 27.
for Matthius, read Matthæus; p. 55. l. 11. *for ascribed, read*
described; p. 60. l. 25. *for the Genuineness, read to the Ge-*
nuineness.

N. B. The English Note at the Bottom of p. 49. should
have been at the very Bottom of p. 50.

A

SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

VINDICATION of the GOSPEL of St. *MATTHEW.*

THE Author of the Dissertation, concerning the canonical Authority of the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, in his second Paragraph, gives us the following State of the *New Testament* Scriptures, in the Age of the Apostles and the Times immediately following.

“ Our Saviour and his Apostles were no sooner
 “ off the Stage, than Forgeries of all Kinds,
 “ broke in with irresistible Force, Gospels, Epistles,
 “ Acts, Revelations, Liturgies without
 “ Number, published in the Names, and under
 “ the feigned Authority of Jesus Christ and his
 “ Apostles, abounded in the Christian Church :
 “ and as some of these were as early in time as
 “ any of the Writings in our present Canon, so
 “ we find they were received promiscuously with
 “ them and held in equal Credit and Veneration.”

Had this been true and all these Assertions capable of strict Proof, the Author might have spared his Dissertation concerning the particular Gospel of St. *Matthew*, seeing they affect the Va-

lidity of the entire *New Testament* Canon. For if the Apostles and their immediate Successors, on whose *Veracity* and *Integrity* we principally depend, for the Genuineness of the sacred Books, were either so careless or so undiscerning, as to receive, *without Distinction*, all Writings that pretended to that *Character*, we can have no Security that any *Scriptures*, recommended by them, were the Works of those inspired Persons under whose Names they pass, nor consequently that they deserve to be regarded, as the sure Rules of our religious Faith and Practice.

But if, on the other hand, it shall appear, that every thing advanced in this *bold* Paragraph is either false or highly uncertain, then the Integrity of our present Canon will yet, as in time past, invincibly rest on the Tradition of the earliest Times, which were naturally best able to judge of the Pretensions of such Writings; because they first saw the Light in their own or the immediately preceding Age.

What the Author of the Dissertation here asserts, has long been the Language of Infidelity. *Primitive Forgeries* and the *promiscuous Use* of all Books pretending to Inspiration, in the early Times, have been triumphantly urged by every late Writer against reveal'd Religion. To repress therefore the Insolence of our Adversaries on this Head, and to do justice to the primitive Believers, whose Reputation cannot be wounded without deeply affecting the Interest of Christianity, I have determin'd narrowly to examine this Point and to enquire,

First, whether the Forgeries of Gospels, Epistles, Acts, Revelations and Liturgies, which immediately after the Death of the Apostles, broke out under the Names of Christ and his Apostles, were so *numerous*, as the Author of the Dissertation represents them to have been.

2dly, Whether some of these Forgeries were as *early* in Time, as any of the Writings of our present *Canon*.

3dly, Whether these Forgeries were received promiscuously with the Books of the present *Canon*, and held in equal Credit and Veneration.

First I am to enquire, whether the Forgeries of Gospels, Epistles, Acts, Revelations and Liturgies, which immediately after the Death of the Apostles broke out under the Names of Christ and his Apostles, were so *numerous*, as the Author of the Dissertation represents them to have been.

The *Æra* of the Forgeries here complained of, commences from the Death of St. *John*, the last of the Apostles, which according to the vulgar Account happened *An. Xti* 100, and cannot reasonably be extended beyond the middle of the second Century. For it would be apparently absurd, to say of any Forgery, which came out more than 50 Years after St. *John's* Death, that it was published as soon as Christ and his Apostles were off the Stage.

Now as to the Writings under the Name of Christ, the only one that has any Pretence to Antiquity, is the Epistle of our Saviour to *Abgarus*, King of *Edessa* set down by *Eusebius*, H. E. l. 1. c. 13. And whether it be a Forgery or not, the

first Account of this Epistle being almost 200 Years later than our Period, it cannot be reckoned among the numberless Forgeries, that were certainly published, as soon as Christ and his Apostles *were off the Stage*, under their venerable Names.

From the List of *supposititious* Writings in our present Account, must also be struck off, tho' coming abroad within the assigned *Æra*, all such Gospels, &c. as either bore no Names of Authors at all, or else were ascribed to Authors that were not of the Number of Christ's Apostles or inspired Followers. Such were the *Gospel* according to the *Egyptians*, and that according to the *Hebrews*, which we cannot properly call *Forgeries*, much less Forgeries under the Names of inspired Writers; and therefore they do not belong to the *Catalogue*, we are in quest of. Such again are the Gospel of *Basilides*, the Gospel of *Cerintus*, and of Christ's Infancy, that of the *Ebionites*, if not the same with the former, the Gospel of *Eve*, that of the *Helkesaites*, and the Gospel of *Valentinus*. For tho' all these are Gospel Histories of no Credit, yet they are not to be deemed *Forgeries*, as not pretending to a false Antiquity nor bearing false Authorities. Lastly since none of them carry the Names of inspired Writers, they are manifestly of a different Species from the Forgeries, spoken of by the Author of the Dissertation.

And now having made the foregoing *reasonable* and just Abatements, I cannot upon the strictest Scrutiny find any forged Gospels, &c. under the Names of Apostles, that were certainly or even probably published in the next Succession
after

after these Times, except the few following ones.

1st, The Gospel of *Judas Iscariot*. This Gospel is mentioned by *Irenæus* * as the Figment of the *Caianites* or *Caianists*, a Species of *Gnosticks*, and probably was the Product of those Hereticks, in the former part of the 2^d Century.

2^{dly}, The Traditions of *Matthias*. It is disputed, on good Grounds, by the ingenious Mr. *Jones*, Meth. of Settl. Canon. Authority of the N. T. pt. 2. c. 23. whether these Traditions were a written Book, or only orally conveyed. If they were handed about in *Writing*, under the Name of *Matthias*, the Apostle, they probably had their spurious Birth within the Period, we are considering. For *Clemens Alexandrinus* † mentions them as used by the Followers of *Valentinus*, *Marcion* and *Basilides*.

3. The Gospel of *Peter*, refuted by *Serapion* ‡ Anno 190. which supported the Heresy of the *Docetæ*, was also probably a *Fiction*, that belongs to our Catalogue.

4. The Preaching of *Peter* was certainly a Forgery, that appeared towards the beginning of the second Century: because *Heracleon*, the Heretick, that lived An. 130 cites it, as we learn from *Origen*. §

5. The Revelation of *Peter*, tho' cited by no Writer, till towards the Conclusion of the second Century, was probably manufactured by some Hereticks, early in the same Age.

* Lib. 1. c. 35.
H. E. l. 6. c. 12.

† Strom. l. 7. c. 17.
§ Com. in Joan. p. 211.

‡ See Euseb.

These are all the *Forgeries*, under the Names of Apostles or other inspired Writers, that are mentioned by the Fathers of the 2d Century and that, upon certain or even probable Grounds, can be deemed as ancient as the Times immediately succeeding those of Inspiration. I do not deny but that other Books of this kind are spoken of by *Epiphanius*, as devis'd by Hereticks of Denominations that subsisted as early as our Period. But then, it must be noted, that those Heresies continued till the 4th Century; and 'tis likely that the Pieces above spoken of might be and probably were composed by the Successors of the early Hereticks, and not by the *Herefiarchs* themselves. Thus, for instance *Epiphanius* (*Hær.* 38.) charges the *Caianites*, a most wild and extravagant sort of Hereticks, with forging the *Anabaticon* or Revelation of St. *Paul*. But this cannot reasonably be understood of the Founders of that Heresy, in the former part of the 2d Century. For had it been so, how comes it to pass, that no Writer from those Days, to the Time of *Epiphanius* should ever mention the Book? Particularly, how came it to pass, that *Irenæus*, l. 1. c. 35. speaking of these very *Caianites* and their forged Gospel, under the Name of *Judas Iscariot*, should utterly pass over that other Fiction, under the Name of *Paul*, if it had been then extant?

There is indeed a Passage in *Irenæus*, wherein he seems to affirm the contrary to all this, l. 1. c. 17. *Πρὸς τῷ τέτοις ἀμύθητον πλῆθος ἀποκρύφων καὶ νόθων γραφῶν, ὡς αὐτοὶ ἐπλασαν, παρεισφέρουσιν εἰς κατάπληξιν τῶν ἀνοήτων καὶ τὰ τῆς ἀληθείας*
μή

μὴ ἐπισαμένων γράμματα. “ Besides, they (the
 “ *Valentinians* of *Marcus's* sort) produce an in-
 “ finite Number of apocryphal and spurious
 “ Scriptures (Writings) which themselves have
 “ devis'd in order to surprize the simple and such
 “ as know not the Writings of Truth.” But
 here it may be questioned, 1st, whether *Irenæus*
 meant *Scriptures*, in the eminent Sense of the
 Word, or only the Writings of their own Sect,
 of which that Father elsewhere seems to say, that
 they were daily increas'ing. “ Every one of them,
 “ says he, *l. i. c. 15.* to the best of his Power
 “ is daily inventing and hatching something. And
 “ no one is accounted perfect among them, that
 “ does not produce great Falshoods.” Such a
 Principle as this, might indeed produce an infi-
 nite Number of dogmatical Treatises; whereas
 an infinite Multitude of forged Scriptures in the
 emphatical Sense of the Word is scarce concei-
 vable. 2^{dly}, Supposing *Irenæus* to mean by
 γράμματα, Books pretending to Inspiration, it does
 not contradict what I advance, unless he had also
 expressly told us, that these *Scriptures* were forged
 under the Names of Christ and his Apostles. A
 Thing he would scarce have fail'd in, if it had
 been fact. Some may think this Circumstance to
 be sufficiently intimated under the Epithet νόθων;
 but that is a Mistake. For that Expression is
 commonly used by Ecclesiastical Writers, to de-
 note no more than that a Book is not *Canonical*,
 without determining, whether it be rightly as-
 cribed to the Author, whose Name it carries: and
 therefore is sometimes applied to Books, that had
 no Author inscribed. Whereas when they meant to
 signify

signify that any Pieces were falsely named, they commonly used the Word *ψευδεπίγραφα*. See the Fragment of *Serapion*, *apud Euseb.* l. 6. c. 12. and *Synopsis* of Scripture, among the Works of *Athanasius*. Lastly, Mr. Jones, in his new Method, &c. pt. 2d p. 479. makes *Epiphanius* say, that the *Gnosticks* made many Gospels under the Names of the Disciples: tho' that Father barely says *ἑυαγγέλια ἃ ἕτερα ἐῖς ὄνομα τῶν μαθητῶν συγγράψασθαι τετολμήκασιν*, they dared to write other Gospels in the Name of the Disciples, *Epiph. Hær.* 26. but does not say nor intimate, that they wrote many.

Thus it appears far from certain, that *Forgeries*, in the Names and under the Authority of *Jesus Christ* and his *Apostles*, broke in without Number, after their Deaths, and abounded in the *Christian Church*. For upon Examination we find such Frauds to have been but in few Instances practised within that Period.

And indeed, considering the Accounts we have of these wild Hereticks from *Irenæus*, it is so far from being Matter of Surprize, that they forged no more Books under the Name of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, that 'tis scarce to be accounted for how they came to cover any of their *Forgeries* under those venerable Names. For that H. Man tells us of the *Marcosian* Hereticks, in particular, l. 1. c. 9. that " they called themselves *perfect* : as if no Man could attain to " their Pitch of Knowledge, not even *Paul* or " *Peter*, or any other of the *Apostles* : but " boasted that they knew more than they all " did."

" did *." Surely then Persons of these Pretensions needed no Man's Testimony to their peculiar Doctrines, but might venture to publish Gospels, and Acts and Revelations upon their own Strength, as indeed they generally did.

Let us now proceed to our second Enquiry, whether any of the confessed *Forgeries* under inspired Names, that appeared in the Times immediately succeeding the Apostles, were as early as the earliest Writings in our present *Canon*.

The Affirmative of this Question, as it stands in the Dissertation, seems little less than a Contradiction in Terms. For how should Books forged in the Names of the Apostles, after they were all dead, be as old as those Books in our present *Canon* which were wrote by the Apostles? The Author of the Dissertation does not indeed expressly affirm, that they were forged after the Apostles were dead; but only that they *broke in*, and *were published* after that Period: Possibly therefore he might mean, that the *Forgeries*, which he contends were as early in Time, as any of the Writings in our present Canon, had been made during the Lifetime of the Apostles, but were suppressed, till they were all gone off the Stage, and then *broke in with irresistible Force* upon the Christian Church.

* Of *Marcion* likewise he says, l. i. c. 29. *Semetipsum esse veraciorem quam sunt hi qui Evangelium tradiderunt Apostoli, suavit Discipulis suis.* " He persuaded his Disciples, that himself was more worthy of Credit than the Apostles that delivered the Gospels." And upon this Principle he curtail'd the Gospel of St. *Luke*, and the Writings of St. *Paul*.

This Opinion, would the Truth permit us to come into it, would afford the strongest Presumption imaginable in Favour of our present *Canon*. For it would thence be evident, that no supposititious Books, under the Names of the Apostles, dared to shew their Heads, whilst those inspired Persons were living and ready to disclaim them. From whence it must follow, that the *Canonical* Books, which appeared during the Lifetime of their reputed Authors, were undoubtedly *genuine*.

But the Christian Cause disdains to serve itself by Improbabilities, and much more by direct Falshoods; such as the Notion aforesaid most certainly is. For we have Reason to believe, that most, if not all the Forgeries under the Names of the Apostles which were not published, till they were off the Stage, were not written till then. It being the joint Suffrage of Antiquity, that those Books were Compositions of Hereticks, that, generally speaking, did not appear till after the Death of the entire Apostolical College.

The Truth of it is, the Author of the Dissertation confounds the Case of *Forged* and *Apo-cryphal* Gospels: As to the latter Sort of which it must be owned, that some very learned Christian Writers have delivered it as their Opinion, that two of them, *i. e.* the Gospel according to the *Egyptians*, and that according to the *Hebrews*, were committed to Writing, as early as any of those that belong to our present *Canon*.

And that some had undertaken to publish Narratives of the History of our Lord, before *St. Luke*, is evident from the Preface to his Gospel.

spel. But that the Gospel according to the *Egyptians*, and that according to the *Hebrews*, were some of those *διηγήσεις*, is mere Conjecture.

And because the Enemies to Revelation, from the supposed Antiquity of these two Gospels, frequently take Occasion to represent the Evangelical *Canon* as imperfect, I shall here beg leave to enquire what Foundation there is for believing them thus *ancient*.

And *First*, As to the Gospel according to the *Egyptians*, the first Time we hear of it in ancient Writers, is from *Clemens Alexandrinus*, Anno 192, who neither vouches for its Antiquity, nor gives us any Light into the Reason of its Title.

The common Opinion of the Learned is, that it was called the Gospel according to the *Egyptians*, because composed by the *Egyptian Essenes*, that were converted upon the Preaching of *St. Mark*. And the Reason of this Conjecture is, First, The *Ænigmatical* Manner of this Gospel, so agreeable to the Custom of those *Jews*, as described by *Philo*. 2dly, Their Aversion to Marriage, which appears also to have been the Turn of that *Apocryphal* Piece. As if the Successors of those believing *Jews*, retaining the same Affection for *Allegory* and *Celibacy*, might not as well be Authors of a spurious Gospel in the End of the first, or Beginning of the second Century, which might also take its Name from them. This is a Conjecture in itself as probable as the former, and more consistent with *History* and *Chronology*. For they who make the Gospel of the *Egyptians* to have been written by

St. *Mark's* Converts in *Egypt*, before any of the Churches Gospels were drawn up, are compelled to suppose, that St. *Mark* preached in *Egypt* long before he compiled his own Gospel, and that he left St. *Peter* for that Purpose, many Years before his Arrival at *Rome*, contrary to the Stream of Antiquity, which supposes him to have accompanied that Apostle in all his Travels, till his Arrival at *Rome*: Where he also staid with him, and where he wrote his Gospel, after the *Exodus*, that is the *Departure*, or else the *Death* of St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, according to *Irenæus*. It must have been after this that St. *Mark* propagated Christianity in *Egypt*, and, at soonest, *Anno Christi* 64, which is 6 Years later than the Writers with whom I am contending, suppose him to have had Converts in that Country, capable of writing a Gospel: And the precise Year in which, according to these very Men, St. *Luke* wrote his Gospel, to amend the Faults of that other *Egyptian* one. This Apocryphal Book therefore, if written in *Egypt*, as the Title imports, must have been later than the three first of our *Canonical* Gospels, which were all compiled before there were Christian Converts in *Egypt* capable of such a Work. Besides, if St. *Luke* had a View to the Errors of this Apostolical Gospel, how came he not to caution *Theophilus* against them, in his *Proæmium*? How happened he on the other hand, rather to give an *Encomium* of the preceding Evangelists, as keeping close to the Traditions of the Eye Witnesses, if the Compiler of the *Egyptian* Gospel had been in the Number? Besides, if this had been true,

we might expect to find the Honour of Marriage strongly asserted in St. *Luke's* Gospel, the Disparagement of which had been the remarkable Error of that according to the *Egyptians*: But instead of this St. *Luke* has been more sparing in Testimonies of this kind, than the other Evangelists. The high Declarations of our Lord concerning the Sacredness of the Marriage Bond, recorded by St. *Matthew* Ch. xix. have no Place in St. *Luke*, no more than the Honour done to this Institution, by our Saviour's *Presence* and *first Miracle* at *Cana* in *Galilee*, mentioned in the second Chapter of St. *John*.

In a Word, so far is it from being certainly true, that the Gospel of the *Egyptians* was earlier than any of those in the present *Canon*, that we are not sure it was not later than even that of St. *John*, the last of the four. The only Pretence for the contrary is, that *Clemens Romanus*, in his second Epistle, seems to have cited this *Egyptian* Gospel. The Truth is, that he relates a Saying of our Lord's, pretty much like what we find to have been in this Gospel from a Fragment of it, extant in the Works of *Clemens Alexandrinus*. But then, *First*, This second Epistle of *Clemens Romanus* is of doubtful Credit. *Eusebius*, *Jerom* and *Photius* declare, that it was antiently rejected. Nothing therefore can be concluded with any Certainty from a Citation therein, concerning the Antiquity of the *Apocryphal* Gospel before us. *2dly*, Admitting this second Epistle under the Name of *Clemens Romanus* to be genuine, there is some considerable difference between our Lord's saying, as it stands in that Epistle,

Epistle, and as it is quoted by *Clemens Alexandrinus*, from the Gospel according to the *Egyptians*. Probably therefore *Clemens Romanus* did not cite the Saying of Christ from that Gospel, but took it from unwritten Tradition.

Upon the Whole, this Gospel of the *Egyptians* was certainly written after those of *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*, and there are no Reasons strong enough to persuade us, that it is as old as the latest Writings of the New Testament *Canon*.

Secondly, With Regard to the Gospel according to the *Hebrews*, supposed likewise by some, to be older than any of the *Canonical* ones, *Hegesippus*, *Anno* 170, is the first Writer that has expressly mentioned it. Nor is it pretended, that any Fragments of it are found in the Writings of the first Century. From those which are found in the Fathers of the succeeding Ages, it appears to have contained some Errors and Falsehoods: For which Cause we may also assuredly conclude, that this Gospel according to the *Hebrews*, was not in the Number of those Narratives mentioned in the *Preface* to St. *Luke's* Gospel, as set forth according to the Traditions of the Eye Witnesses.

But St. *Luke* speaks of many who had undertaken Gospel Histories before him, by whom he could not mean only St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*; for none would call *two*, *many*. Besides, St. *Matthew* could not be said to have received his Materials from those who were *Eye Witnesses*, himself having been an *Eye Witness* to most of the Gospel Facts. Who then could those *many* be, say some, but St. *Mark* and the Author of the Gospels

spels according to the *Egyptians* and the *Hebrews*, the ancientest of all *Apocryphal* Gospels? As if St. *Luke* might not have Respect to some honest and well intended *Narratives*, that being nevertheless of uncertain Authority, grew into disuse, upon the Publication of *Authentick* Gospels, and in Time were utterly lost.

The Sum then of our Enquiries upon this Head is, that the forged Gospels, Epistles, &c. under the Names of the Apostles, that were published after they were off the Stage, are none of them as early in Time as the oldest Writings in our present *Canon*, but on the contrary are all probably later than the latest of that sacred Number; the direct contrary to what is asserted in the *Dissertation* before us.

It is now time to enquire whether there be any more Truth in the third Proposition laid down therein, *viz.* that some of the Forgeries above-mentioned, *were received promiscuously with the Writings of the present Canon, and held in equal Credit and Veneration.*

This Position is obscurely delivered by our Author, as not expressing, either the sort of Christians, that received the *forged* and *canonical* Books thus promiscuously, or the Time when they so received them, or the Instances in which that promiscuous Reception appeared. But all this is cleared up in the Words immediately following, which are,

“ In a word, they were made use of by the
 “ immediate Successors of the Apostles and ma-
 “ ny of them read in the publick Assemblies of
 “ Christians as canonical Scriptures, without the
 “ least

“ least Mark of Distinction in point of Authority.

Here I say our Author speaks plain. The Christians that held some of these Pseud-apostolical Books in equal Veneration with the Writings in our present *Canon*, were, it seems, the Catholics, being the Successors of the Apostles: they were also nearest in time to that inspired set of Men, even their *immediate* Successors, and they shewed their equal Regard to *Forgeries* under Apostolical Names, by reading them in publick Assemblies, as *Canonical* Scriptures.

Could all this be made out plainly and distinctly, I cannot see how the present Canon of the *New Testament* could maintain its Authority. For it is evident, that no Man, nor Church, nor Assembly of Churches, could afterwards have sufficient Reason to distinguish Books into Canonical and Apocryphal, which had been received and read as Scriptures, by the immediate Successors of the Apostles *without any the least Mark of Distinction in Point of Authority*. Something indeed like this has been supposed by a late Writer, but it never was nor ever can be proved, having neither Probability nor historical Evidence to support it.

First, that the immediate Successors of the *Apostles* should make promiscuous Use of forged and genuine Books, is highly improbable in itself. For could they, who had been the Disciples and Companions of the *Apostles*, be unacquainted with their Writings? Or was it consistent with that profound Veneration, these Men had for every thing, that was truly *Apostolical*, to receive all Writings, pretending to that *Character*, without Distinction? could they be so weak, as to sup-
pose;

pose, that so many genuine Writings of inspired Persons could be utterly unknown, for many Years, till their Authors were all dead? Such a Season for Publication was likely to draw *Suspicion* upon *real* Scriptures, and was sure to *hinder* the Reception of *forged* ones. Besides, had the immediate Successors of the *Apostles* been so excessively undiscerning and credulous, as indiscriminately to accept of every thing that came out under the Name of an *Apostle*, would they receive such Pieces from the Hand of *Cerinthus* or *Ebion*, known and detested Hereticks? Would the Catholick Church suffer the Spawn of *Simon Magus* to fill and to direct her *Lectionaries*? Would St. *Polycarp* in particular, that disdained all ordinary Acquaintance with *Marcion*, and proclaimed him to his Face the *First-born of Satan*, promiscuously receive his and other heretical Forgeries, and hold them in equal Credit and Veneration with the Writings of the blessed Apostles and Evangelists? In a Word, we will easily admit, that the immediate Successors of the *Apostles* were *fallible* Men; but they must have been altogether stupid, at the same instant to admit of some *Scriptures*, which took away the Obligation of the *Mosaick Law*, and of others which strongly urged the *perpetual* Observation of it. For such on the one hand, were the Writings of St. *Paul*, and on the other, the Forgeries of the *Ebionites*. Many other flagrant and irreconcilable Contradictions must at once have met in the *Canon* of the *New Testament*, if it had been made up of the Books, which at present compose it, and of those *Forgeries*, which the Author of the Dissertation would

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persuade

persuade us anciently stood therein *without Distinction in point of Authority*. The publick Assemblies of Christians, according to this Account, must have been under strange Confusion, to hear one Day *St. Paul* declare Marriage honourable, and the next, perhaps, to be told from the *Forgeries* of the Encratites, *that Marriage was from the Devils, and that all which entered into that State, were Fornicators*. In a word, *Fire and Water* might as soon unite, as the Writings in the present Canon of the *New Testament*, with the *Forgeries*, that first appeared in the former part of the second Century.

2dly, The promiscuous Usage of forged and genuine Scriptures by the immediate Successors of the Apostles, both in their Writings and publick Assemblies, is a Point by no means *certainly* true, in Fact.

First as to their Writings. It must indeed be confess'd, Mr. *Dodwell* in his Dissertation on *Irenæus* has allowed that the Apostolical Fathers, *Clement Romanus, Barnabas, Hermas, Ignatius and Polycarp*, have so unaccurately cited the Gospels as that it is doubtful, whether they referred to canonical or apocryphal ones; and that they sometimes make use of apocryphal Narratives which are not extant in our present Gospels. But this does by no means come up to our Author's Purpose, who positively affirms, that the Successors of the Apostles made use not barely of *Apocryphal*, but also of forged Pieces, between which different sorts of Books Mr. *Dodwell* himself carefully distinguishes, Dissert. 1. in *Iren.* Sect. 38. 2dly, Even what Mr. *Dodwell* advances has been since proved to be a Mistake by the so often mentioned Mr. *Jones*, in a
Work,

Work, which our Author himself has seen and referred to*: Who therefore is without Excuse, for building upon a Foundation, that he knows has been shaken, if not subverted, without offering any thing new in support of it. And till something of this kind be done, the State of this Question stands thus.

First, it is certain, that all the *Apostolical* Fathers have, in numerous Instances, either cited or referred to our present Gospels.

Secondly, it is not certain, that any one of them has, so much as in a single Instance, cited from an *apocryphal*, much less from a *forged* Gospel.

From whence it follows, *3dly*, that the Author of the Dissertation had no right to say, that some *forged* Gospels were in equal Credit and Veneration, and Use, among the immediate Successors of the Apostles, with any of the received Writings of the *New Testament*.

Equally uncertain, or rather false in fact is what the same Author roundly affirms, “ that
“ many of the forged Gospels, &c. were read in

* In his 4th part of New and full Method, &c. in which he has made it appear, that the Gospel of St. *Matthew* is frequently cited in the Epistle of *Barnabas*, in both *Clement's* Epistles to the *Corinthians*, in *Ignatius's* Epistles, and in that of *Polycarp*. And in his *Appendix*, at the End of part the 2d, he denies, as to the Writings of *Hermas* and *Polycarp*, that there is one Passage different from our present Gospels. In *Ignatius*, there is but one, which after all he proves to have been taken out of St. *Luke*: That as to the Epistle of *Barnabas*, and the two Epistles of *Clement*, the Passages may all be accounted for without supposing them cited from *Apocryphal* Books; either they might be the genuine Gospel laxly cited, or different Passages joined together, or lastly be mere Traditions, not taken from any *written* Gospel whatever.

“ the publick Assemblies of Christians, as *Canonical Scriptures*, without the least Mark of Distinction in point of Authority.” I will be bold to say, that in this, he has not the least Support from any ancient Writer whatever. The most sanguine Advocates for the Antiquity and Usefulness of those two famous *Apocryphal Gospels*, that according to the *Ægyptians*, and the other according to the *Hebrews*, have ventured only to conjecture, that the former was for some time read among the *Essenes*, and the latter among the *Judaizing Christians*. And yet neither of these are strictly within our Author’s Compass: because they are not pretended to have been *forged* under the Names of any Apostle. As to the Epistle under the Name of *Barnabas*, concerning the *Genuineness* whereof the learned World is yet in doubt, this is certain, that the first Writer, who speaks of this Epistle’s being read under any Notion of Scripture, is *Jerom*, in the End of the 4th Century in his Catalogue of illustrious Writers (in *voce Barnabas*) where, at the same time that he owns it was read, he adds, inter Apocryphas Scripturas, *among the Apocryphal Scriptures*. By which after all, I conceive he means no more, than that Christians were permitted to read the Epistle of *Barnabas*, under the Notion of an Apocryphal Scripture, for their private Use, and not that it was read as such in the publick Assemblies of Christians. For when *Jerom* means to say of any Ecclesiastical Book, that it was read in the publick Assemblies, he adds to the Word *legitur*, something else, that is expressive of publick Reading. For instance, speaking of *Hermas’s Pastor*, in the
 same

same Work, c. 10. he says, *apud quasdam Græciæ Ecclesias etiam publice legitur*: *It is even publicly read by some Churches of Greece.* Again of *Clemens Romanus's* first Epistle, c. 15. *In nonnullis locis etiam publice legitur*: *In some places it is even publicly read.* Lastly, of *Polycarp's* Epistle, c. 17. *Usque hodie in Asiæ Conventu legitur*: *It is even yet read in the Asiatick Convention.* I know of no other *forged* or *Apocryphal* Books, within the first Century, except the Acts of *Paul* and *Thecla*, of which * *Tertullian* and † *Jerome* inform us, that it was forged by a *Presbyter* of *Asia*, who being detected of the Fraud by *St. John*, and confessing the Fact, was degraded for it. So far were the Christians of those times from receiving *forged* Scriptures, equally with *genuine* ones, or reading them in their publick Assemblies as *Canonical* Scriptures, *without the least Mark of Distinction.*

Since then the earliest *forged* and *Apocryphal* Books, under the Titles of Gospels, &c. do not appear, either to have been cited or publicly read by the immediate Successors of the *Apostles*, who unquestionably both cited and read in their Assemblies the Books of the present *Canon*, especially the Gospels, we are now prepared to answer the Author of the Dissertation, as to the Question following.

“ The Question hath long been and still is,
 “ whether these Scriptures (*i. e.* the ancient For-
 “ geries under the Names of the Apostles) have
 “ not as good a right to be admitted into the Ca-
 “ non as some of the Books now there, and the ra-

* *De Bapt.* c. 17.

† *Catal. Script. Eccl. in Luca.*

“ ther

“ ther as it does not appear, when or by whom these
 “ were, separately collected or by what new Tes-
 “ timony they obtained the Distinction they at
 “ present bear in the Catholick Church ?” p. 4.

Answer, These *Scriptures*, as our Author calls certain *forged* and *Apocryphal* Pieces, being not *certainly* either cited or publickly read in the Churches by the immediate Successors of the *Apostles*, cannot have so good a Right to be admitted into the *Canon*, as those that are already there, most of which are evidently cited by the apostolical Fathers, and were very early in the *Lectinary Canon* of the Church. I mean those, concerning which no doubt was ever made by Catholick Christians. And for those, call'd the *doubted* Pieces, they have a much better right to be where they now stand, than any of the *Apocryphal* or *forged* Books, which the Author of the *Dissertation* contends for as equally deserving Admittance into the Canon of the *New Testament*. For 1st, the Epistle to the *Hebrews* is spoken of by St. *Peter*, 2 *Ep. c. iii. v. 15*. Its very Words are copiously used by *Clemens Romanus*, in an Epistle written before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and it is found in the old *Syriack* Version, which shews that it was publickly read in the Christian Churches, early in the 2^d Century. Whereas nothing like this can be said of those *Scriptures*, which our Adversary has set up as Rivals to this and some other canonical Books. 2. The Epistle of St. *James*, being likewise a part of the old *Syriack New Testament*, was publickly read as *Canonical Scripture*, in the Age after the *Apostles*, which no *forged* or *Apocryphal* Book

Book appears to have been. 3. The 2d Epistle of St. *Peter* is part of it *almost* recited in *Terms*, by the Author of that under the Name of St. *Jude*. But nothing like this can with any Certainty be affirmed of those *Scriptures*, for whose Admission into the *Canon*, the Author of the *Dissertation* so strongly pleads. 4. The 2d Epistle of St. *John* is cited by *Irenæus*, the Scholar of *Polycarp*, who had been St. *John*'s Disciple, as the Work of the Evangelist: but neither he nor any other Ecclesiastical Writer of the same Antiquity and Qualifications, does in this manner vouch for any of our Author's *Scriptures*. 5. The Book of *Revelations* is spoken of by *Justin Martyr*, an early Writer of the 2d Century, and ascribed to St. *John* the Apostle, long before the Mention of any *forged* or *Apocryphal* Book, in any Ecclesiastical Writings, now extant.

As to the two remaining Epistles, the third of St. *John* and that of *Jude*, they are not expressly mentioned nor cited, by any Ecclesiastical Writer, earlier than *Clemens Alexandrinus*, which, considering the Shortness of them, is not much to be wondered at. But still their Pretensions to *Canonical* Authority are incomparably stronger than those of the *forged* and *Apocryphal* Pieces; such are, first the *Soundness* of their *Matter*. 2dly, The *Hebraisms* in their *Stile*, and particularly, the *Similarness* of the 3d Epistle of St. *John*, in *Manner* and *Diction*, to the genuine Works of the Evangelist. 3dly, Their Reception in the Church by the Generality of Christians and their Admission into most of the *Catalogues* of Scripture from the Time of *Origen*, who drew up the 1st Catalogue

logue of this sort, now extant, to our own Days. For 1st as to *Jude*, he is largely and expressly cited by *Clemens Alexandrinus*, in the 3d Book of his *Pædagogus*, c. 8. a Work, in which it is remarkable, that he never cites any of the *Christian Apocrypha*. From whence it is strongly to be presumed, that he looked on the Epistle of *Jude* to be none of that Number. It is likewise soon after cited by *Tertullian* and by *Origen*, in the third Century, and in general, by most of the Fathers in the fourth and the succeeding ones. As to *Catalogues*, tho' the Epistle of *Jude* be wanting in that of *Origen*, yet this seems owing entirely to Oversight. For he cites it, as I said before, and with this high *Encomium*, *that it was written by Jude and filled with the wholesome Words of heavenly Grace*. In all the following Collections made by *Eusebius*, *Athanasius*, the elder *Cyril*, the Council of *Laodicea*, *Gregory Nazianzen*, *Epiphanius*, *Philastrius*, *Jerom*, *Ruffinus*, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, *St. Austin*, and the Council of *Carthage*, the Epistle of *Jude* is constantly found, without any Mark of *Doubtfulness*, except in that of *Eusebius*.

2dly, The third Epistle of *St. John*, as well as the second, is spoken of by *Dionysius Alexandrinus*, and allowed to be the Work of that Apostle, and he argues from that Supposition, in a critical Dissertation, concerning the Author of the *Apocalypse* *. And tho' this third Epistle is not, like the second, cited by the Fathers of the second and third Century, yet that must be imputed to Accident, and the no Occasion those

* Ap. Euseb. l. 7. c. 25.

Writers had, to make use of any Authority from so short an Epistle. For otherwise, it was liable to no one Objection, that did not equally affect the second Epistle of St. *John*. And hence it came to pass, that even in the fourth Century, tho' it was then generally received, and tho' that Age abounded with more and more voluminous Writers, than the two preceding ones joined together, this third Epistle was very rarely cited. But as to *Catalogues of Scripture*, we find it inserted in all those abovementioned, and in two more, viz. that of *Origen*, who presses its Reception, and in that of *Amphilochius*.

But in all these Respects the *spurious* and *apocryphal* Scriptures of our Adversaries are very defective. For, *First*, as to *Soundness of Matter*, they all contained *Absurdities* and *Falshoods*, and most of them contradicted the genuine Writings of the New Testament. *2dly*, The *Stile* of most of these *Apocryphal* Writings discovers the Authors of them neither to have been *Jews* nor *Hellenists*, as the inspired Penmen universally were. Besides, the almost perpetual *Allegory*, that appears in the Remainders of these *forged* Books, is plainly different from the modest Liberty of that kind taken by the *Apostles* and *Evangelists* in their genuine Books. *3dly*, These *forged* Books were never appealed to by the Orthodox Writers of the Christian Church, as authentick Scriptures. *Irenæus* condemns all the Gospels, except those four received into the Church's Canon. So does *Clemens Alexandrinus*, and tho' he quotes the *Preaching of Peter* and

the *Traditions* of *Matthias*, in his *Stromata*, which he composed as a *Common Place* or *Repertory*, rather than a set *Tract*, and therefore allowed himself the greater *Liberty* in this *Respect*; yet in his *Pædagogus*, which he compiled with greater *Exactness*, we find not one *Ecclesiastical* or *Apocryphal* Book appertaining to *Christianity* cited, not so much as the *Pastor* of *Hermas* or the *Epistle* of *Barnabas*.

Serapion, *An.* 190. mentions the Gospel of *Peter*, but reckons it among the ψευδεπίγραφα or *Forgeries* under *Apostolical* Names, knowing, says he, that we have received no such*.

Tertullian, in the End of the second Century, mentions no one forged Book, but the Acts of *Paul* and *Thecla*, which he declares to have been a detected Forgery†.

Origen, towards the middle of the third Century, mentions many forged and apocryphal Gospels; but declares, ‡ that the Church received only four, the rest belonging to the Hereticks. He also mentions the Doctrine of *Peter* §: but at the same time condemns it as a Forgery. The Acts of *Paul* are twice * cited by him, but neither time as Authentick Scripture: The Book of *James* is also appealed to in *Origen's* Works†, but in company with the Gospel of *Peter*, which he elsewhere rejects, as being none of the four Gospels received by the Church. Besides, the Opinion supported by these Books, was that of other

* Ap. Euseb. l. 6. c. 12. † Tertul de Baptismo. c. 17.

‡ Ap. Euseb. l. 6. c. 25. & Com. in Luc. in initio.

§ Pref. in libr. πρὸς Ἀρχαν. * Com. in Joan. p. 298. & ὡς ἄλλοι, l. 1. c. 12. † Com. in Mat. p. 211.

Men, and does not appear to have been approved by himself. Lastly he quotes the Epistle of *Barnabas* : But by leaving that and all the preceding *Apocryphal* Books out of his Catalogue of Scriptures, extant in *Eusebius* *, he plainly appears to have thought, that they were none of them *Canonical*.

The Author of a Book *de non iterand. Baptism*. at the End of St. *Cyprian's* Works, mentions the Preaching of *Paul*, but condemns it as an *Heretical Forgery*.

Lactantius takes a Passage from the Preaching of *Peter* and *Paul*, but not as the Work of either of those Apostles.

As for the Writers of the fourth Century, they never speak of the *forged* and *apocryphal* Books, so highly celebrated by our Author, but as spurious and forged by Hereticks.

Agreeably to this, they are also omitted, in all the abovementioned Catalogues of Scripture, or if mentioned, are constantly distinguished, as *Apocryphal* Books.

Upon the Strength of these Facts therefore, we may venture to decide the Question, which the Author of the *Dissertation* says, *has long been and now is*, and to pronounce, that the *Apocryphal* Scriptures, whose Cause he pleads, have not as good a Right to be admitted into the *Canon*, as even the most exceptionable of those, which are now found therein. The *Apocryphal* and the genuine Books, especially the Gospels, do not appear from the Beginning, ever to have been *blended* in

* H. E. 1. 6. c. 25.

one Canon, and from the Days of *Irenæus*, they were apparently *separate*. Sufficient it is for the Justification of our present Canon that the immediate Successors of the Apostles, appear to have used no other than it; and that as soon as the Necessity of Affairs required and the Circumstances of the Times would permit, this *Canon* was established by Synods and Councils. * Many Synods of Orthodox Churches had certainly made Decrees for this Purpose, even in the second Century, tho' no Monuments of them remain at present. And the *Canons* of the *Laodicean* Fathers, tho' questioned as *spurious* by Infidels, have, I hope, been sufficiently defended †.

Again, since we find it a mere arbitrary Assertion of our Author's, that the *forged* and *canonical* Books of the *New Testament* were in any Age of the Church *equally revered* and *promiscuously used*; since the Distinction which the latter at present bears in the Catholick Church, appears not to be *new*; but there was always a *Wall* of *Partition* between them and the forged and apocryphal Pieces; we need no new Testimony in vindication of our present Canon, which rejects every *forged* and *apocryphal* Book. For whilst the most exceptionable Parts of the *New Testa-*

* *Tertullian*, in his Book *de Pudicitia* appeals to the Catholicks concerning the Pastor of *Hermas*, whether it had not been pronounced *apocryphal* and *false* by every Council even of their own Churches, which sufficiently implies that several Councils of Catholick Churches had been holden to distinguish between true and apocryphal Scriptures.

† See Crit. Exam. of *N. T.* and Version of *N. Test.* pt. 2^d, p. 96. & seq.

ment appear always to have been received by some or other of the primitive Churches, the other found Admittance only amongst the worst sorts of Hereticks by whom they were compiled.

Our Author is pleased to add, *p.* 3. “ that the
 “ Authority of the Scriptures in the present *Canon*
 “ has been disputed from their first Publication
 “ and Appearance in the World.” By which if he means, that there were always Hereticks, who refused to be determined in the great Articles of Religion, by the Authority of those Writings which the inspired Persons left behind them, we will not dispute a thing so much besides the present Question. But if his Meaning be, that any Christians, *orthodox* or *heretical*, disputed the Genuineness of all the Books of the *New Testament*, now received, from their first Publication, we deny the Certainty or even the Probability of this Assertion and defy him to make Proof of it.

He does indeed strongly affirm this of one particular Book, *viz.* the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, concerning which he is hardy enough to declare, *p.* 4. “ That it hath not only been
 “ disputed but absolutely rejected by great Numbers of Christians, some of whom were of the
 “ primitive Class, even the *Nazarenes* or first Converts to Christianity, who ’tis believed used a
 “ different Gospel to it or one very much interpolated and enlarged, which in Opposition to
 “ ours they constantly affirmed to be the only
 “ true Gospel of St. *Matthew* the Apostle.

I have owned above, that Multitudes of the worst sort of Christians, heretical ones, have demurred to the Authority of St. *Matthew*’s and
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indeed of all the other received Gospels : but I am confident our Author does not find from good Authorities, that any of the *first* Opposers of St. *Matthew's* Gospel pretended that it was not written by that *Apostle*. They plainly rejected it on a quite different Pretence, namely, *that they themselves were wiser than the Apostles* and their own traditionary Doctrines of greater Credit, than the Writings of *Matthew* and his Brother Evangelists. Further, that the first Converts to Christianity were called *Nazarenes* by their Enemies, we grant, but that they ever assumed that name themselves, appears not, and indeed is every way improbable. The first Notice we have, that any Christians distinguished themselves by such an Appellation is, from *Epiphanius* and *Jerome* towards the End of the fourth Century, who both speak of the *Nazarenes*, as Hereticks. These indeed it is justly believed, *used a different Gospel from that of St. Matthew*, or as others have thought, St. *Matthew's* Original, *very much interpolated and enlarged*: but that these *Nazarenes*, constantly affirmed theirs to be the only true Gospel of St. *Matthew*, in opposition to ours, is demonstrably false in fact, and in the Nature of the Thing incredible.

Antiquity is altogether silent about any such *Opposition*, and we do not find that the Judaizing Christians, under any denomination, ever pretended to be Masters of a Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, that differed from ours; particularly, that Sect which called themselves *Nazarenes*, in the fourth Century, had no such Pretensions; but called their Gospel the Gospel according

according to the *Hebrews*, and sometimes according to the Apostles *. The Catholick Christians indeed of those Days, who not understanding the *Chaldee* in which the *Nazarene* Gospel was written, knew but little of it, having in their Heads the old Tradition, that St. *Matthew's* Gospel was originally written in that Language, generally concluded that these Gospels must have been originally one and the same. And *Jerom*, as his manner was, in his *Catalogue of Illustrious Writers*, to keep close to the Authors from whence he took his Materials for that Work, without interposing his own Judgment, delivers the common Opinion, that the *Nazarenes* of *Beræa* used the very Hebrew of St. *Matthew*: Tho' he who translated that Gospel, and has left us so many Fragments of it, different from our present Copies, the Genuineness of which he never in the least doubted, must have known, that there were few Things in common between them, except the Language in which they were both written.

* The Gospel of the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites* were, in the main, the same: But of the latter, *Epiphanius* little less than expressly affirms, that tho' they used the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, they did not call it *his*, but the Gospel according to the *Hebrews*; his Words are, *καὶ δέχονται, μὲν καὶ αὐτοὶ τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον εὐαγγέλιον. (τάτῃ, γὰρ καὶ αὐτοὶ, ὡς καὶ οἱ κατὰ Κήρυθον, χρῶνται μόνῃ) καλῶσι δὲ αὐτὸ κατὰ Ἑβραῖος. Indeed these also receive the Gospel according to St Matthew (and it is the only Gospel made use of by them and the Cerinthians) but they call it the Gospel according to the Hebrews. The particles *μὲν* and *ἔ*, shew a plain Opposition of Sense; and that tho' the *Ebionites* in the Judgment of *Epiphanius*, received the Gospel of St. *Matthew*, they did not admit it under the precise Notion of a Gospel written by him; and therefore called it by another Name.*

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I have elsewhere † also observed, that this Gospel of the *Nazarenes* speaks in the Name of the Apostles in general: So that those Hereticks could not, without the utmost Absurdity, insist on its being the true Gospel of St. *Matthew*.

Since then the first Christians do not appear to have rejected the present Gospel of St. *Matthew*, and since they who did reject it, laid nothing of *Forgery* or *Spuriousness* to its Charge, but seem, by the manner of their Opposition, rather to have admitted it, as the *genuine* Work of that Apostle, such Rejection could not raise great Suspicion of the *Genuineness* of our present Gospel among any impartial or considering Men; but is on the other hand a very strong Argument of its being unquestionably the Work of that Apostle.

Nor could any Suspicions of this kind be formed by the little Notice that is taken of this pretended Rejection, by my Lord of *London*, in his third Pastoral Letter, which, our Author will have it, hath also very much contributed to that *Suspicion*. The earliest Enemies to the *Genuineness* of St. *Matthew's* Gospel are found to have been the *Manichees*, a Sect never heard of in the World till the latter end of the third Century; and the next to them are the *German Anabaptists* of the sixteenth Century; and from both these our Author hath not disdained to borrow Weapons in his present War upon the blessed Evangelist. But tho' he has thought the

† Vindication of the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, p. 80, 81.

trivial Objections of these *Visionaires* worth his Notice, the Bishop had just Reason to despise them. For, as Testimonies, they were both too late to affect the Genuineness of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, which till *Manes's* Time, had passed, for ought we can find, for the Work of that Apostle without Contradiction. Nor did those wild Hereticks, I mean the *Manichees*, pretend there was any Defect in the Church's Tradition, for St. *Matthew's* being Author of the Gospel ascribed to him, or produce any Counter-Tradition of their own, but rejected this Gospel, and indeed the entire New Testament, on the bare Word of their Teacher *Manes*, who pretending to be the *Paraclet*, by Virtue of that infallible Character, pronounced them all spurious. See *Richardson's* Canon of the New Testament vindicated, p. 58.

What therefore his Lordship offers in Support both of the Genuineness and Authority of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, is enough to put both out of all Dispute with Men of Sense and Candor. And notwithstanding all our Author's Pretences to the contrary, the ill Usage he on every Occasion bestows upon that learned Prelate, is an undoubted Indication, that he had but too well succeeded in establishing the *Canon* of the New Testament. If the third Pastoral Letter had thus really served any Purposes of Infidelity, the Partisans of it would silently have rejoiced in the Effects, and have been less abusive to the Right Reverend Author.

The Dissertation Writer is pleased to observe, p. 7 and 8, "That some Christians have found

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" fault

“ fault with, and raised Scruples even from
 “ the stated Number, of our present Gospels,
 “ itself; alledging, that in the main, they con-
 “ tain little more than a fourfold Relation of
 “ the same Facts, of the same One Divine
 “ Person, of which they imagine the Holy
 “ Ghost could never be the Author: For who
 “ will say the Holy Ghost could ever be the
 “ Dictator of Superfluity and Repetition; or
 “ that if he had inspired the Writer (suppose)
 “ of any one Gospel, such Gospel alone should
 “ not have been sufficient to all the Purposes of
 “ Evangelical Revelation?

But here, *First*, It is false to say, that the Go-
 spels contain little more than a fourfold Rela-
 tion of the same Facts. The Reader, on his
 own Perusal, will find very many Facts related
 in St. *Luke* and St. *John*, of which no Notice is
 taken by either of the former Evangelists, and
 others related by St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*,
 which have no place in the latter Ones. *2dly*,
 Where the same Facts are related by the four
 Evangelists, they are seldom told in the same
 Words: But commonly each of them contri-
 butes somewhat to illustrate or explain the rest.
3dly. Therefore, since there is no mere Super-
 fluity and Repetition among the four Evangelists,
 but even their Variations conduce to the fuller
 and clearer Understanding of many Passages in
 the History of our Lord, their Gospels are not
 on this Account unworthy of the Relation which
 Christians suppose they stand in to the Blessed Spi-
 rit. *4thly*, Admitting the Holy Ghost to have
 inspired the Writer, (suppose) of any one Gospel,
 there

there would be no Absurdity in saying, that such Gospel alone might not be sufficient to all the Purposes of evangelical Revelation. Because the Holy Ghost might not intend that any one Gospel should be *thus sufficient*, but might see cause rather to serve those Purposes, by several Persons, successively writing under his Directions.

Our Author proceeds, *p.* 8. with the Objections, as he pretends, of some nameless Christians. "The Number of Gospels, say they, reflect Deficiency on each other, more Gospels than one, instead of witnessing for, imply Defects in those that went before; for the supplying of which the latter were necessarily published; for Instance, St. *Luke* wrote his Gospel, only, because many who had undertaken, attempted or endeavoured at the same Thing before him, had not acquitted themselves faithfully, or had not been sufficiently accurate therein; this is the Sense most Interpreters put on the first Words of St. *Luke's* *Proœmium*; and some think he must needs have had Regard to *Matthew's* Gospel (among others) which was then extant, and could not but be known to him.

To all which I answer, That if by the *Defects* and *Deficiency* in the first Gospels, our Author means no more, than that they were not so compleat, but that there was room for others to come after, and make useful Additions, we admit the Fact, but still see nothing in all this, that calls in question the inspired Characters of the former Evangelists. For suppose that the Holy Ghost absolutely dictated those Gospels,

and that the Evangelists were no more than the *Conduit Pipes* of Revelation (which tho' constantly urged upon us by the Author of the Dissertation, is not the Inspiration contended for by the Generality of Christians) yet Defects in the Sense above-mentioned, are every way consistent with Divine Inspiration. The contrary Opinion supposes, what never has, nor ever can be proved, *viz.* That the Blessed Spirit must at once dictate every thing to the Evangelist employed by him, and can never possibly see Cause to employ others afterwards in the same Work. But if by the Deficiency, which it is pretended, the Number of Gospels reflect on each other, be meant *Unfaithfulness*, or *Errors* proceeding from want of Care, we utterly deny that the latter Evangelists either expressly or virtually reflect any such Deficiency on their Predecessors. The Instance of St. *Luke* proves nothing of this kind, neither in his first, nor in any other Words of his *Proæmium*: Does that Evangelist charge those who have gone before him in writing the Gospel History, either with Dishonesty or Negligence? On the contrary he seems, according to the most probable Construction of his Words, rather to commend them, and to say of them, that they had attempted to compile Narratives of the Facts believed among Christians, καὶ ὧς in the very same manner as those who had from the Beginning been Eye-Witnesses and Ministers of the word, had delivered them. So that it would prove no Disparagement to St. *Matthew's* Gospel, tho' that were supposed to be in the Number of those referred to in the first Words of St. *Luke's Proæmium*, as some, it

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seems,

seems, of our Author's Acquaintance think. But indeed the thing of itself is strangely improbable. For tho' St. *Matthew's* Gospel was then extant, and known to St. *Luke*, yet he knew it under the Character of a Gospel, written by one who was himself an *Eye-Witness* and *Minister of the Word*: Whereas the Evangelists referred to by St. *Luke*, are described by him to have been none of this sort, but Persons, who, like himself, received their Intelligence at second Hand.

But if this Instance comes short of the Point of which our Author is somewhat conscious, he promised himself better Success in what follows: For he adds, " But however this be, 'tis manifest
" in Ecclesiastical History, that the sole Occa-
" sion of St *John's* writing his Gospel in his
" very old Age, was purely to *supply* the Defects
" which himself and the *Asian* Bishops had ob-
" serv'd in all the other three." For which he refers us, in a Note at the bottom of the Page, to *Eusebius*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Jerom* and *Epiphanius*, and to particular Places in each of them. But here it unluckily happens, that two of his Witnesses, * *Jerom* and † *Epiphanius*, speak directly against him: For they assign another Cause for St. *John's* writing a Gospel, besides that of supplying Defects in former Evangelists, viz. The Confutation of *Cerinthus's* and *Ebion's* Heresy. Indeed *Epipha-*

* *Scriptit Evangelium rogatus ab Asiæ Episcopis adversus Cerinthum aliosque Hæreticos & maxime tunc Ebionitarum dogma confurgens, qui asserunt Christum ante Mariam non fuisse.* — *Sed & aliam causam hujus Scripturæ ferunt. This second Cause, altogether distinct from the first, he makes to be the supplying of Defects.*

† *Epiph. Hæres. 51. Alog.*

nus

nits speaks of this, without mentioning any other. Now possibly our Author may reckon it a Defect in St. *Matthew*, and the two next Evangelists, that they had not anticipated Heresies, which had no Being when they wrote. But every impartial Man must see, that this would be downright Prevarication, built upon Words strained beyond their natural Meaning. For at this rate, it might as well be charged upon the Evangelists, as a Defect, that they had not obviated every Heresy that has arisen in the Church, to our own Times, or that shall hereafter arise.

It is not therefore manifest from *Ecclesiastical History*, that the sole Occasion of St. *John's* writing his Gospel, was purely to supply the Defects of the other three. Some of our Author's own Witnesses assign a different Cause, viz. The Rise of Heresies, which the other three Evangelists could not provide against; because it happened long after their Gospels were written; to whom may be added *Irenæus*, who, l. 3. *adv. Hær. c. 11.* assures us, that St. *John* wrote his Gospel, as an Antidote against the Error of *Cerintbus*. And agreeable to all this, the learned Moderns still assign the Supply of Defects and the Confutation of Heresies, as distinct Motives, to St. *John* to write his Gospel, tho' our Adversary, for his own Convenience, has thought fit to unite and make them one.

Let us hear how he proceeds, p. 9. " This the
 " Fathers generally acknowledge, tho' in so do-
 " ing ('tis apprehended) they immediately sub-
 " vert the Divine Authority of those Gospels;
 " which few in Reading these Fathers observe;
 " not

“ not because of the Difficulty, but because Men
 “ dare not see, nor look into the Grounds of their
 “ Belief, taken implicitly from their Teachers.”

The Omission of some Facts in the former Evangelists, which the succeeding ones filled up, cannot possibly subvert the Authority of those Gospels, till it be proved, that every inspired Writer must necessarily exhaust his Subject, and that the Holy Ghost cannot possibly intend that the Purposes of Evangelical Revelation, shall be supplied by several successive Hands. Our Author is perhaps the first that has apprehended, or rather misapprehended, the Danger to the Divine Authority of the Gospels from such Acknowledgments of the Fathers : But sure I am, he did not observe this in reading those Fathers himself ; because he has given us a Demonstration that he took their Acknowledgments on this Subject, not from their Writings, but from the third Vol. of Mr. Jones's New and full Method, &c. c. 14. p. 138. where that Gentleman laying it down, that St. John's second Intent in writing his Gospel, was, to supply the Defects of our Saviour's History in the other three Gospels, refers in the bottom of the Page to the very same Fathers, whom the Author of the Dissertation has also referred to. But it so fell out, that there should be an Error of the Press in Mr. Jones's last Reference, that to *Epiphanius*, where instead of *Hæres. 51. Alogor.* we now have *Hæres. 11. Alogor.* and this Mistake our Adversary has with great Fidelity transcribed into his Dissertation, where it stands thus, *Hæres. 2. Alog.* And thus it is these Pretenders to the Knowledge of

of Antiquity make their *Parade* among the Vulgar, as Men of profound Reading ; they garble the Collections of others, and retail the Thefts for their own, till some particular Marks discover the true Owners.

The Author's last Remark introduces a Story, not a little reflecting on the Memory of a Right Reverend Bishop, now with God, who, when persuaded to examine the Merits of the Trinitarian Controversy, made this Reply to Mr. *Whiston*, as he himself affirms. " Sir, I dare not examine, I dare not examine ; for if we should examine, and find that you are in the Right, the Church has then been in an Error so many hundred Years."

The Truth of this Answer depends upon Mr. *Whiston's* Character for Veracity, and wherever that passes for unquestionable, the Prelate is certainly given up as a very weak and insincere Person. But a less warm Man than Mr. *Whiston* would have been afraid to publish such an Account, however persuaded that it was true. He would have reflected how disingenuous it must appear, for any one to attack the Reputation of a Person in his Grave, upon his own single Testimony. He would further have considered, how hard it must be to gain Belief, that Bishop *Smalldridge* should fall into such a *Panick*, merely on the Proposal of examining into a fundamental Doctrine of Christianity, who had so long and reputably presided over Divinity Disputations at *Oxford*. What could such a Man expect to find upon Enquiry, more than he had heard objected in the Schools? Nothing sure considerable enough
to

to give him any Apprehensions for the Doctrines of the Catholick Church.

But however this may be, the Author of the Dissertation has thought fit to observe, from the very slight Defence, as he calls it, made by my Lord of *London*, in his third Pastoral Letter for the Gospel History in general, and its reputed Authors in particular, "That *Bishop Smalridge*
 " his Case was not singular, that if the Author
 " of Pastoral Letter were sincere, his Knowledge
 " of the Subject must have been superficial.
 " For that if he had dared to examine things
 " deeply, and acquainted himself more intimate-
 " ly with the Opposition some Books of the
 " New Testament have met with, and the Ar-
 " guments of the Hereticks thereupon, he would
 " have chose not have entred into the Disqui-
 " sition at all, rather than have left it upon
 " such pitiful Evidence, as must needs increase
 " the Number of those Hereticks.

The Right Reverend Author here aimed at, calls his Letter a Pastoral one, the Nature of which evinces, that his Design in general was, to convey Instruction to his Diocese, and he expressly declares, *p.* 7. that his principal Intention was, "to give his People a clear View of the
 " Evidences both of the Truth and the Autho-
 " rity of the New Testament Writings." But does such a View become the less clear by his Lordship's Silence concerning the Opposition and Arguments of Hereticks? (and of all Opposition to sacred Books within the Church, he has made particular mention.) The Advocates for Infidelity know in their own Consciences, that

it does not. Being unable therefore to find fault with the Bishop's Conduct in the Pursuit of his own avowed Design, and yet resolved to find fault, the only Course left, was, that which they have taken, to assign him a Province, which he never dreamt of, and to persuade the World, that his Lordship, instead of instructing the Believers of his Diocese, was sustaining the Assaults of Infidels, instead of speaking plainly and usefully to Men of all Capacities, had undertaken a Disquisition, only for the Satisfaction of the Learned.

Page 13. Our Author observes, " That where-
 " as the Letter-Writer lays great Stress on the
 " ancient Enemies of Christianity, as having
 " never denied the Gospel Facts, it may
 " with much better Grace be affirmed they
 " never believed them; for if they did, why
 " were they any longer Enemies to Christianity?"
 As if there was no Medium between denying the Gospel Facts and believing them. Not but that many who allowed the Gospel Facts, yet continued spiteful Enemies to Christianity. Of this sort was *Celsus* and others, who having nothing to object against the Truth of the Gospel History, and unwilling, at the same time, to own that the Miracles therein mentioned were Divine Attestations to the Truth of the Christian Religion, placed them to the Account of *Magick*, and the Power of *Charms*.

But he proceeds, *ibid.* " The Gospels testi-
 " fy, and the Event of Things too plainly
 " proves, that the Divine Jesus lived and died
 " without Honour in his own Country." The
 Gospels

Gospels testify, that Jesus had not the same Honour paid him at *Nazareth*, the Place of his Education, as in other Parts: But that he lived without Honour in his own Country, taking that Expression to extend to *Judea* and *Galilee*, and the adjacent Countries that were inhabited by *Jews*, is not said in the Gospels. On the contrary, they relate how the * Fame of him was spread abroad throughout *Galilee*, how Men in High Place, as † Rulers of the Synagogue fell at his Feet; that the People § were once about to take him by Force, and make him a King; how ‡ not long before his Death, he rode into *Jerusalem*, in all the Pomp and Triumph of a Royal Entry. These and many other Instances we have of the Honour paid to Jesus in his Lifetime, and how generally the Fame of him and his mighty Works was known in his own Country. And that Pagan Authors, who wrote of him at, or near his own Time, neither expressly denied the Gospel Facts, nor delivered any thing concerning him, that was inconsistent with those Facts, we assuredly conclude from hence, that neither *Celsus*, *Porphyry* nor *Julian*, who lived before the Destruction of the early Antichristian Writings, found any thing in them to justify the Denial of those Facts. So that the Silence of the antient Enemies to Christianity about the Facts of the Gospel, is both a clear and strong Presumption that they were incontestable.

Page 16. Our Author is positive, that the Ecclesiasticks alone had the Gospels and other

* *Mat.* iv. 24. ix. 16, 31. xiv. 1. † *Luke* viii. 41.

§ *John* vi. 15.

‡ *Mat.* xxi. 7, 8, 9, &c.

Books of the New Testament in their Hands, and that they preserved them carefully from the Heathen, till the third or fourth Century. In my Vindication of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, p. 71, 72. I have shewn this to be entirely a Mistake, and what it was gave an Handle to our Adversary for this Calumny. But since the writing of that, I am able to produce express Testimony against it. For whereas the Dissertation Writer is express, p. 38. that the Sacred Writings of the New Testament could not be obtained by the Heathen, but thro' Force and Stealth, for the first 300 Years of the Christian Æra, let our Author hear *Tertullian*, who lived and wrote in the End of the second Century, declaring the contrary in the 31st c. of his Apology. In answer to those who would by no Means allow the *Loyalty* of the Christian Religion, he speaks thus. *Qui ergo putas nihil nos de salute Cæsarum curare, inspice Dei voces, literas nostras, quas neque ipsi suprimimus & plerique Cæsares ad extraneos transferunt.* " You who think we have no Solicitude for the Safety of the Emperors, inspect the Words of God, our Scriptures, which we our selves *do not suppress*, and which many Accidents put in the Hands of such as are Strangers to us." If such Evidence as this does not stop the Progress of this Scandal upon the primitive Christians, it must be resolved into the Malice and settled Obstinacy of those who manage for Infidelity. For no Words can more plainly evince, that the Ecclesiasticks of the three first Centuries, did not carefully preserve the Books of the New Testament from the Heathens,

thens, and that in Fact, *Force* and *Stealth* were not their only Means of coming at those Books; but that they had them by the same Variety of Chances, which makes other Books, not designedly or constantly suppressed, change their Owners.

Page 32. Note at the Bottom, "The Distinction of sacred Books into Canonical and Apocryphal, was first invented by Hereticks, to which the Church, after some Time, was obliged to yield. —Each Party espousing those Scriptures as canonical, in which their peculiar Tenets were to be found, the rest they termed Apocryphal, or Deutro-canonical, suffering them to be read not only at home, but in publick Assemblies."

A notable Account of the first Distinction between Canonical and Apocryphal Scriptures! But so far as the Church is concerned, there is neither Truth nor Probability in it. The Extravagancies indeed of Hereticks this way, exceeded the Account here given: For they not only made it a Rule to reject all Scriptures, however attested to be the Writings of inspired Authors, that made against them, but also forged many such to give direct Countenance to their own wild and wicked Opinions. Besides this, out of the Church's *Canon*, which alike in all its Parts, stood upon the foot of uninterrupted Tradition, they each singled out, and received particular Books, that they thought might be most easily perverted to establish their respective Errors. And some of them, when they found not their Account in taking Canonical Books entire, omitted such
Parts

Parts of them, as were too stubborn for their Purpose. With these and the like Practices they are charged by the early Fathers of the Church. But nothing of this sort ever was, or ever could, with the least Colour of Probability, be alledged against the orthodox Christians. The only Rule with them for distinguishing the Merits of Books, that pretended to Apostolical Authority, was, that of *Prescription*. Whatever Writings had been received in the several Churches, and handed down without Interruption, through the Succession of Bishops, these stood *first* in the Class of *Scriptures*. Others, that found Admittance in some Churches, but had not been taken in by general Consent, for *some* Time, and in *some* Places, had only a *secondary* and *doubtful* Authority. But those, which no Catholick Church had received into its Code, and which were found only in heretical Conventicles, were, for that Reason, rejected as *spurious* and *forged*. Whereas, if the Church's Method had been, as our Author confidently reports, to espouse those Scriptures for canonical, in which their peculiar Tenets were to be found, many of the doubtful Books must have, from the beginning, been espoused for unquestionable, because they contained the same Tenets with those, which were strictly canonical. But after all, if the Primitive Church had observed the Method ascribed to them in the Note now before us, and rejected many Scriptures, merely because her Tenets were not found in them; such Conduct had been infinitely more reasonable on her Part, than on that of the Hereticks: For many Churches were founded by

Apostles,

Apostles, before there were any Scriptures of the New Testament: During which Time the Preaching of the Apostles and their Successors in those Churches, was their Rule of *Faith* and *Practice*. And this Doctrine was, for some Centuries, preserved invariable throughout the wide Confines of the Christian World; which was a Demonstration, that it had received no Mixtures or Corruptions: For, considering the Distance of the several Churches, the Variety of Languages used in them, and the Difficulty of Correspondence between the dispersed Communities under almost constant Persecution: I say, considering all this, nothing could account for their exact Agreement in Doctrine, but their having kept inviolably to the first Teaching of their inspired Founders. Whenever therefore the Primitive Christians found Books under Apostolical Names, with Tenets different from Apostolical preachings, they had reason to reject them, being assured, that inspired Persons could not preach one thing, and commit another to Writing. But the Case of *Hereticks* was very different from that of the *Orthodox*. Their Traditionary Tenets were neither *ancient* nor *uniform*. They could recur no higher upwards than to *Valentinus* and *Marcion*, or others their respective Masters, between whom, and the Apostolical Times, there was a large *Hiatus*. Nor were the Hereticks *unanimous* in their Traditions, but each of their Subdivisions had Tenets rejected by other Hereticks, as well as by the Church. It was therefore the highest Pitch of Impudence in these Men, to make their modern and discordant Systems of Faith

Faith, the Rule whereby to judge, what Scriptures ought to be espoused, and what repudiated.

P. 33. Speaking of the Occasion of St. *Matthew's* writing a Gospel, our Author pronounces it to be very uncertain. " All we can gather (say
" his Adversaries) from among Historians concerning this, is from *Eusebius*, who they think
" gives but a scurvy Account of this Matter.—
" According to him neither the twelve Apostles
" nor seventy Disciples were much inclined to
" write Books: He says *Matthew* and *John* only
" have left us any written Memoirs (or historical
" Gospels) and farther, that even these two were
" compelled to write what they did (by their
" Auditors he means) *Matthew* in particular by
" the *Hebrews*, when he was on the Point of
" setting out on his Travels, to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles."

But here it would not be improper, to demand a Reason of this Writer, why he calls the Occasion of St. *Matthew's* publishing his Gospel *uncertain*, when so ancient and veritable an Historian, as *Eusebius*, is express in that Point. For is there any thing improbable in the Account he gives, or do other Historians assign a different Occasion? No, neither of these is the Case. Only it is the *Will* and *Pleasure* of our Author to disparage the Gospel in hand, by representing every Circumstance belonging thereto, as *uncertain*. Further, he pretends to give us *Eusebius's* own Sense of this Matter, and accordingly has printed it in *Italick*. And if we might depend upon the Honour of an Infidel, who has declar'd, p. 6. " that every thing he has taken out of the
" Fathers

“ Fathers and Ecclesiastical Historians, in relation to St. *Matthew's* Gospel, is fairly cited,” it would be needless to examine, how honestly he has behaved in the Case before us. But as this is a Compliment which controversial Writers seldom pay each other, so the Enemies to Christianity, of all others, have the least Reason to expect it, after so many Forfeitures of Character on this Account. And upon Enquiry, we find no Cause to repent of our *Diffidence*. For tho' *Eusebius* owns, in general Expression, that the two Apostolical Evangelists were under a *Necessity* of writing, yet, with respect to St. *Matthew*, he neither says nor intimates, that his Auditors laid him under that *Necessity*, by any Importunity of theirs, but rather that the Apostle determined himself to commit his Gospel to writing, from the Exigency of his own Affairs, which required his Absence from his Countrymen, and out of a tender regard for their future Welfare *. And, most certain it is, that the Historian does not say, what our Author expressly fathers upon him, viz. that St. *Matthew* was compelled to write by the Hebrews. As to the other Evangelist St. *John*, neither does it appear, that *Eusebius* meant he wrote his Gospel entirely thro' the Compulsion of his Auditors. His Words are these †. 'Tis said that St.

H

“ *John*

* Ματθαῖος, μὲν γὰρ πρότερον, Ἐβραίοις κηρύξας, ὡς ἔμελλε καὶ ἐφ' ἑτέροις ἵεναι, πατρὶω γλώττῃ γραφῇ παραδόντες τὸ κατ' αὐτὸν εὐαγγέλιον, τὸ λείπον τῇ αὐτῇ παρσίᾳ, ταῖς αἰφ' ὧν ἐτέλλετο διὰ τῆς γραφῆς ἀπεπλήρης, H. E. l. 3. c. 24.

† I am apt to think that if *Eusebius* had intended to say, that *John* was requested by his Friends, he would not have
contented

“ *John* having for many Years delivered the Go-
 “ spel by Word of Mouth, did at length pro-
 “ ceed to write on this Occasion. The three a-
 “ fore-written Gospels by this time had got into
 “ every one’s hand, and consequently into St.
 “ *John*’s; who is said to have received them (for
 “ genuine) having born Testimony to the Truth
 “ of them.” The only thing he thought want-
 ing to the (Evangelical) Scripture, was a Narra-
 tive concerning those things which Christ did
 in the beginning of his Preaching. Here then
 we have the first and principal Motive of St. *John*’s
 writing a Gospel, to wit, his own Observation
 concerning the Deficiency of the former ones.
 Afterwards indeed, according to the * common
 Acceptation of *Eusebius* his Words, he is made
 to say thus†. “ For these Reasons ’tis reported

contented himself with the single Expresssion of παρεκλη-
 βέντα, but would have added, as at other times, ὑπὸ τῶν
 γνωρίμων. I rather therefore believe the following Version
 comes nearer to the Sense of *Eusebius*. They say that *John*
 the Apostle, induced by these Motives, set down in his Gos-
 pel, &c. But this I entirely submit to the Judgment of the
 Learned.

* Id. ibid. Ἰωάννην Φασι τὸν πάντα χρόνον ἀγράφω
 κερημένον κηρύγματι, τέλος δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ γραφῇ ἐλθεῖν τοι-
 ᾶσδε χάριν αἰτίας. Τῶν προαναγραφέντων τελῶν εἰς πάντας
 ἤδη καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν διαδομένων, ἀποδέξασθαι μὲν Φάσιν, ἀλήθειαν
 αὐτοῖς ἐπιμαρτυρήσαντα· μόνην δὲ ἄρα λείπεσθαι τῇ γραφῇ τῷ
 περὶ ἐν τῶν πρώτοις καὶ κατ’ ἀρχὴν τοῦ κηρύγματος ὑπὸ τοῦ χειρὸς
 πεπεραγμένων διήγησιν.

† Id. Ibid. Παρεκληθέντα δὲ τῶν ἐνεκὰ Φησι τὸν Ἀπό-
 σολον Ἰωάννην τὸν ὑπὸ τῶν προτέρων Ἐυαγγελιστῶν παρσιω-
 πηθέντα χρόνον καὶ τὰ κατὰ τῶν πεπεραγμένα τῷ Σωτῆρι
 τῷ κατ’ αὐτὸν εὐαγγελίῳ παραδόναι.

“ that

“ that *John* the Apostle, at the Request of his
 “ Friends, set down in his Gospel our Saviour’s
 “ Transactions during that time, which the for-
 “ mer Evangelists had passed over in Silence.”
 But according to this, which is the received In-
 terpretation, it is evident at first sight that St.
John was not *compelled* to write what he did, by
 his Auditors, but only *desired*, and that the De-
 sire of St. *John*’s Friends was only the *second* and
subsidiary Cause of his writing, whilst the *first*,
 the *urgent*, the *compulsive* Reason, was, to per-
 fect the evangelical History, which he thought,
 as it then stood, was somewhat *defective*.

Thus we see, that the Author of the Disserta-
 tion has put a false Sense upon the Words of *Eusebius*, with regard to both the apostolical Evan-
 gelists, when he makes him mean, *that they were*
compelled to write what they did, by their Auditors.
 And we should be utterly at a loss, why so much
 pains is taken to represent this Account in so
scurvy a manner, if what comes next had not hap-
 pily explained it. For he immediately *discants*
 thus upon it.

“ By which this Father would unhappily in-
 “ sinuate that neither *Matthew* nor *John* wrote of
 “ their own Inclination or Free-motion of the
 “ Holy Ghost, but that they were obliged there-
 “ to by their own Disciples against their Will;
 “ which hath given occasion to Libertines to say,
 “ these Disciples had the Propagation of Christi-
 “ anity more at Heart, and consequently had
 “ more of the Holy Ghost in them, than their
 “ Teachers.

But we find that, on the contrary, *Eusebius* ascribes the Gospels of both these Evangelists, primarily to their own Judgment and Inclination, and that St. *Matthew's* Disciples are not so much as named among the *Causes* of his Writing. The Misrepresentation therefore was intended purely to make way for the *Sarcasm* that succeeds, and *Eusebius* was forced to give a *scurvy Account* of this Matter for fear of spoiling a *scurvy Jest*.

We have already had many *Specimens* of our Author's Skill in Antiquity, and of his Honesty in representing the Sense of Fathers and Historians; and, if I am not much mistaken, his Talent at Reasoning appears no less singular, of which the Reader shall have the following Instance.

Eusebius is thought, by most learned Men, to have assigned a different Time to the Writing of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, from that given by *Irenæus*. But the Writer of the Dissertation, p. 35. says "it is an unanswerable Objection to any Authority of *Eusebius*, that he could have no Intelligence of this Matter, but from *Irenæus* only." But how does he prove this Negative, on which the Validity of his Objection entirely depends? Why he tells us, "that no other Ecclesiastical Writer, that we know of (save *Irenæus*,) has fixed the Time for the Writing of this Gospel." He means no Writer before *Eusebius*. But this is merely *Argumentum ab Ignorantia*. And it may be as truly said, on the other hand, that for ought we know, many Writers, earlier than *Eusebius*, but now lost, have fixed the *Æra* of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, besides *Irenæus*. So that the Reason by which this Man supports his
unanswerable

unanswerable Objection, is as proper to *solve*, as to *defend* it. I must do him the Justice to own that he betrays a *Consciousness* of this two Pages further, where leaving out the Clause, *that we know of*, he boldly affirms " that *Eusebius* had no other " Father, from whom he could take his Account " of *Matthew's* time of writing but from *Irenæus* only." Upon which he proceeds in a triumphant manner; saying " there is no Question, " had he assigned any time, but that he would " have concurred with him, (*Irenæus*) for it appears he was very conversant with *Irenæus's* " Writings, and often copied his Words from " him, as particularly he does this Account of " *Matthew's* Time of Writing, in his Ecclesiastical History, and which 'tis likely he acquired in; for else, why did he not censure it " there, or contradict it rather in his *Chronicon*, " where he is wholly silent.

A little Pains would have made all this *wise* reasoning unnecessary. For after all, *Eusebius* has assigned a Time for the writing of *St. Matthew's* Gospel in his *Chronicon*, tho' this is expressly denied by our Adversary: Nor does he in this Assignment concur with *Irenæus*: But differs from him at least 17 Years. For *Eusebius* directly says, *Matthius in Judæa Evangelium primus scribit*. And this Event he places in the third Year of *Caligula*; or in the Christian Account, *Anno 41*. On the other hand, *Irenæus* fixes the Time of *St. Matthew's* Writing to that Period, when the Apostles *Peter* and *Paul* were preaching at *Rome*, and founding a Church there. But according to the same *Chronicon* of *Eusebius*,
Paul

Paul who arrived at *Rome*, the latter of the two, came thither in the last Year of *Claudius*, i. e. *Anno Dom.* 58. Whether *Eusebius* or *Irenæus's* Chronology be the truer, is of small Consequence to the Merits of *St. Matthew's* Gospel, as I have elsewhere shewn: Nor should I have troubled my Reader with the mention of it, but to convince him that the Author of the Dissertation both reasons and affirms at *Random*. If therefore after so many and grievous Mistakes, Men will yet take the *Merits* of Christianity upon *Trust* from him and other such Writers, the *Peril* of *Infidelity* is intirely *their own*.— They have had *fair* and *frequent* Warning.

There are still more Examples of wilful Misrepresentations to be met with in the Work before us, particularly *p.* 73. where he speaks of *Episcopus* in the following manner. “ *Episcopus*,
 “ one of the ablest Divines of the last Age, reflecting on some indefensible Errors in the
 “ New Testament; and admitting them nevertheless to be genuine, observes against those,
 “ who, out of a ridiculous Piety, laboured in
 “ vain to account for them. — *That'twas much*
 “ *better, and would cause less Scandal, to acknowledge*
 “ *fairly some Failings in the Canonical Books,*
 “ *rather than fly to absurd Interpretations, by*
 “ *which the Suspicion of a Failing is not only not*
 “ *removed, but increased; and when the Fault is*
 “ *not acknowledged, it looks, says he, as if we were*
 “ *not in good earnest for Truth.*”

By this Account, any one would imagine, that *Episcopus* had admitted there were *indefensible Errors* in the New Testament, and had specified
 some

some such. Further, by the general Expression of *Errors* and *Failings*, the Reader is left to suppose, that possibly they were *capital* ones, affecting the *Essence* of Religion, or the *Truth* of History in some *material* Point: Both which are absolutely false. For, *First*, *Episcopus*, in the Place cited, does not suppose any *actual* Errors in the New Testament, and therefore could not reflect on any such. *2dly*, The Errors admitted by him as possible in the holy Books, are particularly ascribed to be *mere Circumstantials* that do not at all concern *Objects* of Faith, nor are *material* to historical Facts, such as *Names*, *Authors*, or *Particulars* of *Time* or *Place*. But as to the Sense of the New Testament Writings, whether relating to the *Substance* of Religion or not, he thinks it may easily be vindicated from every Charge of *Contradiction*, *Absurdity*, or *Falshood*. For lesser Matters, such as those above specified, he thinks they were not of *Inspiration*, but left to the human Faculties of the Writer, who, through lapse of Memory, might *possibly* err therein. Not but that even in the *pretended* Instances of this sort, he thinks *Interpretations* may aptly be given sufficient to satisfy *pious* Minds, tho' not Men of *cavilling* and *rigid* Dispositions. And he recommends it as more adviseable to admit of such a *pious* Interpretation, tho' not wholly free from Cavil and *Difficulty*, than to own even a *slight* Lapse in a mere Circumstantial of Scripture. But, adds he, *when I speak of a pious Interpretation, I do not mean such a one as is horrid, crude, violent, forced, and utterly improbable.* After which follow the Words in which

which we are chiefly concern'd, *Satius enim, tutiusque, & calumniæ minus obnoxium forte esset, liberaliter, libenterque levem lapsum memoriæ agnoscere, ne manifeste absurdis & contortis favere videamur, quam absurdâ nimis Interpretatione uti, ad lapsum leviorum excusationem: alioquin suspicio lapsus non modo non tollitur, sed augetur & quia culpa non agnoscitur, non bona fide veritas a nobis quæri, sed pertinacia qualibet causâ indui videtur.*

“ For it would be better and safer, and perhaps
 “ less liable to Reproach, freely and willingly
 “ to own a *light* Slip of Memory, lest we be
 “ thought to favour things *manifestly absurd* and
 “ *unnatural*, than to use a *very* absurd Interpre-
 “ tation in excuse of *light* Mistakes. Otherwise,
 “ instead of removing, we increase the Suspici-
 “ on of Error, and not owning a Fault, we seem
 “ not sincere in the Quest of Truth, but obsti-
 “ nately bent to maintain every Cause.” From
 this Passage, and what precedes it, we find, that
Episcopus is only considering a *possible* Case, and
 does not blame the Conduct of any who had
 actually engaged in accounting for Difficulties in
 the sacred Books. He thinks the *lightest* Slips
 therein capable of such Solutions as ought to
 satisfy *candid* and *reasonable* Enquirers. But only
 if no such Interpretations could be had, he
 thinks it *safer*, and *more adviseable* to own *little*
 Faults, than to defend them by *absurd* Excuses.
 He further explains the *pious* Interpretation he
 speaks of to be such, as tho’ it does not entirely
 remove the *Difficulty*, yet ought to satisfy the
pious Person, tho’ not the most *rigid* Caviller. Of
 this latter sort, he seems to think no Account

should be made. For Cavilling, says he, *has no End, and argues an unteachable Disposition, and one estranged from moderate Councils.* Upon the whole therefore, *Episcopus* did not think it in vain to account for the *slightest* Difficulties in the New Testament, but fixes a *Brand* on such as our Author and his Friends, who cavil *without end*, and resolve never to be satisfied.

Alike unfair is the Representation he makes of *Frederic Spanheim's Dubia Evangelica*, of which he speaks thus, *p. 75.* " the learned *Frederic Spanheim* the Father, a very orthodox Divine, hath
 " raised near one hundred Objections or Doubts
 " (he calls them) touching the Authority of this
 " Gospel, in the Solution of which he exhausts
 " near 900 Pages in two Quarto Volumes, with
 " very little Satisfaction, as appears, either to
 " himself or others.

But here first it is false to say that *Spanheim* raised all these Doubts, who only collected those, which others had raised, in order to their *Solution*. 2dly, It is false likewise to say, that he raised so many Doubts concerning the *Authority* of this Gospel. For many of them do not at all affect that Gospel, but are mere Explications of obscure Passages, or else concern the Disputes of those, who equally owned its *Authority* and contended solely about the Meaning of the Evangelist. This false Representation is the more inexcusable, because the true Nature of those Doubts might have been learnt, without looking into the Body of the Book, from the *Title Page* only : in which the Author avows that his Doubts were partly *explanatory* partly *controversial*; and that his Concern

in the latter, was, not only to vindicate the *Authority* of the Gospel against the *Cavils* of *Atheists*, *Pagans* and *Jews*; but the true Sense of it likewise, against *Samosatenians*, *Anabaptists*, *Papists* and other *Sectaries*. 3^{dly}, How comes our Author to know that the Labours of the learned *Spanheim*, in his *Dubia Evangelica*, were attended with little Satisfaction to himself or others? Why he says *it appears*: but which way, is a Particular, that must not be too *minutely* inquired into. Certain however it is, that Mr. *Spanheim*, the best Witness of his own private Satisfaction, expresses no Uneasiness on this Head. He had also the Pleasure of observing, as himself declares, in the End of his Preface to the first Part, that it had met with *Approbation* and *Success*. Some of the best Judges in that Time commended and encouraged it. Particularly the great Primate *Usher* and *Daniel Heinsius*.

But, however it might fare with *Spanheim*, the Writer with whom we have to do, has, to repeat his own Blunder, exhausted above 70 Pages with great Satisfaction, *as appears*, to himself. Notwithstanding so long a run of Misrepresentation and Falshood, he comfortably sings his own *Requiem*. " Thus, says he, I have finished my
 " Inquiry into the Authority of the Gospel ac-
 " cording to *Matthew*, *with the strictest Regard to*
 " *Truth*." Happy it is for this Man that Letters cannot blush. Had such a Thing been possible, I am confident these last Words of his, in spite of the Printer's Care, must have been out of Countenance. For was it *a strict Regard to Truth* that animated him to treat a learned and great Pre-
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late with unheard of *Wantonness* and *Insolence*, for not entering into Particulars concerning St. *Matthew's* Gospel, which in his Soul and Conscience he knew neither belonged to the Design of a Pastoral Letter nor were consistent with it? Was it the Closeness of his Attachment to this same Truth that has occasioned him to misrepresent almost every Author he cites from, ancient and modern, sacred and ecclesiastical? that has made him affirm and deny so many things of whose Truth he neither was nor could possibly be satisfied?

Particularly where was this Writer's *strict Regard* to Truth, when, to the Fathers attesting the Genuineness of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, he objects, p. 74. that, *for the most part they were Hereticks and Enemies to the Catholick Church?* Nay, *that there is not a single Father quoted by the Letter-writer, but whom he knows to have been heterodox in Opinion, and an Infidel with regard to the Essentials of our present Christianity.* Assertions, of which it is hard to pronounce whether they contain most of Falshood or Impertinence! For what can be more extravagant, than to tax those with *Heresy*, who were the grand Supports of *Orthodoxy*, or those, as *Enemies* to the Catholick Church, most of whom *lost* or, at least *hazarded* their Lives by adhering to it? Again, what Pretence has he to affirm, that the Author of the *Pastoral Letter* quoted not a single Father, but whom he knew to have been an *Infidel* with regard to the *Essentials* of our *present* Christianity, meaning, I suppose, the Catholick Doctrine, of a Trinity of real and coequal Persons in the Unity of the Godhead? Where-

as no one knows better than his Lordship, that all the Fathers he has quoted, except *Eusebius*, unquestionably confirm that Catholick Doctrine, in whole or in part. And even he, whilst consistent with himself, speaks up for the same Truths, and gave his *formal* Assent to them, after some Hesitation, in the Council of *Nice*. But admitting these Charges to be true, are Errors in *Opinion* and *Faith* allowed to destroy the Credit of antient Witnesses to Books in general? Does the Authority of the most received *profane* Authors rest always on the Evidence of *Philosophers* and *sound Christians*? Does it not commonly suffice, that the Antients, who *support* or *continue* a Tradition in favour of old Writings, however ignorant or erroneous in Religion, were Persons, to whose *general* Veracity we have no just Exception? If then such Testimony avails to convince us that the Works of *Thucydides* and *Xenophon* are genuine, why should it not be as effectual for those of *Matthew* and *Mark*? Lastly, the Author of the Dissertation did not consider, that by representing the *Fathers*, as *Enemies to the Catholick Church*, and *Infidels with regard to the Essentials of our present Christianity*, he has really made their Testimony the Genuineness of the four Gospels, more *available to confirm Believers and convince Hereticks*, than ever. For by this Management, the Evidence of those Fathers to our *Evangelical Canon*, is become *the Evidence of Enemies*, which when given in favour of the Adverse Cause, is justly accounted the most *credible* of all *human* Attestations.

Our Author's professed Regard to Truth in this Inquiry, does not however hinder him from owning

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ing some seeming Partiality of Conduct, *p. 76.*
 “ Tho’, *says he*, I may seem in the Pursuit of
 “ Argument, to lean to the Side of Hereticks,
 “ yet this is in order to extract the Truth, which
 “ can no otherwise be come at, than by rigid
 “ Enquiries of this kind.” The old way then
 of *extracting the Truth*, by an equal and candid
 weighing of Arguments on both Sides of every
 Question, is no longer practicable. Truth, by
 this Account, has lost her *Radiancy*, and is be-
 come so *shy* a Dame, that she will not appear
 but to those who *lean to one Side* in a Dispute.
 In short, if we will hearken to the Dissertation
 Writer, rough Methods in this Case are the best:
 The only way to force Truth out of her Re-
 cesses, is to treat her with *Rudeness* and *Contempt*:
 And we must fly from *her*, as well as from *For-*
tune, if we intend Possession. Not content with
 disclaiming all Prejudices against the Gospel of
St. Matthew, he next assumes an *Air* even of
Concern and *Affection* for it.

“ The Arguments, *says he*, here urged are most
 “ of them ancient, and the pretended Contradic-
 “ tions, Mistakes or Inadvertencies (call ’em what
 “ you will) such only as have been long since
 “ animadverted upon:—Nevertheless, *with Grief*
 “ *I say it*, they have never yet met with a tole-
 “ rable Answer, or Solution.” *p. 76.*

Poor Gentleman! Well, how *differently* does
 Grief operate upon *different Men*! Most Writers,
 under such a Trouble, would have set themselves
 to work and have tried, at least, to produce An-
 swers and Solutions more *satisfactory*, than those
 already given. At least, they would see, that the

Charges against our Evangelist, had always a *real* Foundation, and tho' grieved at the bad Success of such, as had, in vain, laboured to acquit him, they would publish the ill News without any *indecent* Reflections or *unseasonable* Sarcasms on their *Persons* and *Characters*. But the Dissertation Writer oft creates the Difficulties he grieves for, without observing common Civility to those who would remove *real* ones. If any of the Antients seek to bring him Comfort, by assuring him that the Gospel, whose *defenceless* State he laments, was really the Work of a Writer, that besides *Honesty* and *sufficient Information*, had the Direction of the blessed and infallible Spirit, he rewards his officious Pains by calling him Knave and Fool, and by telling him that *he is not to be credited in the Relation scarce of any one single Matter of Fact*. If a Bishop of our Church speaks a good Word for St. *Matthew*, and endeavours to establish the Genuineness of his Gospel, by the very same Rules, that satisfy all the World in parallel Cases, he treats him with insufferable Insolence and Disdain. Lastly, if a modern Critick enters into a particular Defence of our Evangelist, and spares neither *Labour* nor *Learning* to clear up every thing of *doubtful* Appearance in him, this Mourner for the Imperfections of St. *Matthew* sneers *the dubious Gentleman, as he calls him*, p. 75. and laments "that he had not raised in himself one
 " Doubt more and pursued it close, which he
 " thinks 'tis likely would happily have absorbed
 " and put an end to all the rest." Meaning, to be sure, a Doubt about the Genuineness of this entire Gospel. So that in the Compass of one
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Page, our Author has the *good Nature* or the *Insincerity* (call it which you will) to grieve on both Sides of the Question. First, that any one should be at the Pains of defending *St. Matthew* at all, and again, that he should be no better defended, than he is.

To conclude, The Adversaries to the Books of the New Testament may *lean to the Side* of Infidelity as close as they think fit, it will never displease us, so long as their Arguments are founded on Truth; let them examine our Witnesses with the utmost *Rigour*, provided they do not set them aside, upon general, unsupported, and impertinent Allegations. They are welcome to revive all the old Objections, on condition they shew particularly, as they proceed, the *Insufficiency* of the Answers and Solutions hitherto given. *Lastly*, We have nothing to object to Wit and Liveliness on such Occasions, except it be mixed with *Scandal* and *Scurrility*, or substituted in the Room of Argument, and made the *Test* of Truth.

But if they proceed to add *Falshood* to *Partiality*; if they go on to *distinguish* between the Method of proving sacred and profane Writings, without assigning a *real Difference*; if they continue to repeat thread-bare Objections upon their own bare Word, that the Answers already given are not *sufficiently solemn and à propos*. *Lastly*, If in a Controversy upon a learned and serious Subject, our Adversaries shall go on without the *Accuracy* of *Scholars*, or the *Wit* and *good Manners* of *Gentlemen*, the Controversy must be endless.

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It is now more than 30 Years since Mr. Toland, taking Advantage of some Expressions, which fell from Mr. Dodwell in his Dissertations on *Irenæus*, first endeavoured to place the antient *Apocryphal* Gospels on a Level with those received in the Church. The same Gentleman afterwards particularly appeared in the Defence and Recommendation of the *Nazarene* Gospel. In both these Attempts, he was *learnedly* and *solidly* refuted, convicted of numerous Mistakes, and much Prevarication. But in all this Time, we are not advanced one Step further in the Controversy. His Blunders and Falshoods have neither been *justified* nor *retracted*. And those who have succeeded him, what do they else but repeat after him the *old Stories* of *Apocryphal* Scriptures, primitive Forgeries, the *Nazarene* Gospel, *Irenæus's* Winds, and *Dodwell's* Concessions; hardly varying *Toland's* Expression, and sometimes not taking care so much as to mend his *mistaken* References?

And now, can the Managers for Infidelity reasonably hope, that the Men of Sense among them will always be blind to these *obvious* Things? No. They must both see, and sadly regret them; and if those in the Direction of that Affair do not study to retrieve a Reputation for some Degree of Learning, Sincerity and good Manners, we may almost venture to predict, that even the Libertin Part of Mankind will in a little Time desert them, and chuse to be indebted for Peace of Mind to any other Methods, rather than to the stale and baffled Pretences of Infidelity.

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